

Message Text

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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSED AT
RWANDAN COLLOQUIUM (BACKGROUND)

1. RECOGNITION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONS OF RESPECT FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, SOCIETY'S OBLIGATION
TO PROVIDE ACCESS
TO FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS FOR ALL ITS MEMBERS, AND THE
DESIRABILITY OF JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE AND AN
EQUILIBRIUM OF POWER IN MODERN AFRICAN STATES WERE
AMONG THE CONCLUSIONS REACHED BY A COLLOQUIUM ON
HUMAN RIGHTS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN FRANCOPHONE
AFRICA WHICH ENDED A WEEK OF DISCUSSIONS IN BUTARE,
RWANDA, ON JULY 7.

2. JURISTS, PROFESSORS, ECONOMISTS AND OTHER EXPERTS
FROM SIX AFRICAN COUNTRIES (RWANDA, BURUNDI, ZAIRE,
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CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE, IVORY COAST AND CHAD) AGREED
THAT A MORE EQUITABLE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM
IS NEEDED TO ENSURE FULL DEVELOPMENT OF ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL RIGHTS, IN SOME WAYS BEYOND THE PRESENT MEANS
OF POOR COUNTRIES. IN THIS CONTEXT, THEY NOTED THAT
"DEVELOPMENT" MUST REFER BROADLY TO IMPROVING THE
QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THE INDIVIDUALS WHO MAKE UP EACH

SOCIETY. IN ITS CONCLUSIONS, THE COLLOQUIUM EMPHASIZED THE NEED FOR EDUCATION AND POPULARIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS NORMS. PEOPLE'S BASIC NEEDS MUST BE MET IN ORDER TO MAKE CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS MEANINGFUL. THUS ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE FROM DEVELOPED ECONOMIES REMAINS A NECESSARY FACTOR FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF POOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

3. IN A PRESENTATION TO THE COLLOQUIUM, THE RWANDAN HISTORIAN ABBE ALEXIS KAGAME DISCUSSED INSTITUTIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN TRADITIONAL RWANDAN SOCIETIES, AND A WORKING GROUP HEADED BY ZAIRIAN PROFESSOR KAMANDA LUMPUNGU IDENTIFIED SEVERAL SPECIFIC RIGHTS GUARANTEED GENERALLY IN TRADITIONAL AFRICAN SOCIETIES: THE RIGHT TO LIFE, THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE JUSTICE, THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, AND THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE IN CIVIC DECISION-MAKING. THE PROBLEMS OF RECONCILING TRADITIONAL PRACTICES WITH THE DEMANDS OF MODERN AFRICAN SOCIETIES WAS THE SUBJECT OF A PAPER PRESENTED BY ZAIRE'S PROFESSOR E. O. DJELO. FOR EXAMPLE, MODERN AFRICAN STATES HAVE REDUCED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRADITIONAL BALANCES OF POWER BETWEEN CHIEFS OR KINGS AND NOTABLES ACTING AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PEOPLE, AND THIS HAS GIVEN RISE TO THE NEED FOR NEW PROCEDURAL GUARANTEES TO PROTECT HUMAN RIGHTS. REFERENCE WAS MADE TO ESTABLISHMENT UNCLASSIFIED

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OF AN INDEPENDENT JUDICIARY AS A CHECK ON EXECUTIVE POWER, AND FILIP REYNTJENS OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA LAW FACULTY CITED THE TANZANIAN COMMISSION ON INQUIRY AND OTHER OMBUDSMAN-LIKE INSTITUTIONS AS ANOTHER MEANS OF CHECKING THE TENDENCY OF ABUSE OF EXECUTIVE POWER.

4. THE BUTARE COLLOQUIUM -- THE FIRST TIME IN RECENT YEARS THAT FRENCH-SPEAKING AFRICANS HAVE MET PUBLICLY TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES -- WAS ORGANIZED BY THE FACULTY OF LAW OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF RWANDA AND THE INSTITUTE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF WASHINGTON, DC. IT WAS PRESIDED OVER BY FULGENCE SEMINEGA, PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT OF RWANDA, WHO HAS REPRESENTED RWANDA ON THE UNITED NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. IN HIS REMARKS CLOSING THE COLLOQUIUM HE CALLED IT "AN IMPORTANT STEP IN THE SEARCH FOR THE MEANS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, THANKS TO THE WISDOM, THE FRANKNESS, AND THE DYNAMISM OF THE PARTICIPANTS."
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